

## **Taming Labor: Workers' struggles, workplace unionism and collective bargaining on a Chinese waterfront**

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### **Abstract**

This paper draws on data acquired in semi-structured interviews to address the question of effective workplace trade unionism in China. These are rarely-sighted phenomena due to rigid prohibitions on organizing outside the Party-led All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Indeed some commentators are extinct. Evidence from a case study of the Yantian International Container Terminal suggests that this is not necessarily the case. The authors do not underestimate the very real constraints on labor organizing but rather turn the spotlight on working class power in the wider context of labor militancy and cautious trade union reform. We argue that the YICT union developed a system of annual collective bargaining in order to 'tame' the power of militant dockworkers and prevent strikes. This required an effective enterprise-level trade union that was nevertheless able to manipulate members' somewhat ambiguous acceptance of its role.

### **Introduction**

The All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) is the only legal trade union in China and operates under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The prohibition on independent trade unions is rigidly enforced by the state generating two outcomes relevant to this paper. First, workplace trade unions are mostly dependent on management. Second, workplace unions are generally perceived by workers as puppet organisations (*kuilei gonghui*) incapable of extracting improved pay and conditions from enterprises. In short effective workplace trade unionism is a rare beast in China.

But there have been sightings. Our story unfolds at one of the world's busiest ports – the Yantian International Container Terminal (YICT) – where unofficial collective action led by crane operators disrupted operations on two occasions in 2007 and 2013. The intervening years were distinguished by high levels of militancy across China's export powerhouse, the

province of Guangdong to which YICT is crucial. Indeed, the Shenzhen Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) – responsible for the YICT enterprise union – had come to regard fire-fighting strikes as routine procedure. It would draw on authority derived from being Party-led to discipline management into compliance with relevant regulations and cajole workers back to work with a compromise deal that did little to improve the union's credibility.

In the years that separated the two strikes at YICT, the union went way beyond fire-fighting tactics. The SFTU supported a newly-formed YICT union in conducting annual collective wage bargaining that simultaneously contained and threatened strikes. This required an effective workplace trade union with the capacity, more or less, to reflect the views of its members and present them to management in a negotiable format. How and why did this rare appearance of effective workplace trade unionism happen? How did collective bargaining developed at YICT? Why does this matter given the constrictions on union activity in China?

The questions are important for three reasons. First, as a junior partner of the CCP, the ACFTU is required to maintain stability and represent members' rights and interests. The absence of freedom of association renders this contradiction politically sensitive especially as Article 1 of the Constitution states that China remains a socialist state led by the working class. This duality leaves the organisation open to pressure from below in the form of wildcat strikes; and from above in the form of CCP leaders' frustration with ongoing instability. Indeed, the issue of trade union representation has continued to climb the political agenda to the point that President Xi Jinping recently ordered the ACFTU to present a blueprint and timetable for trade union reform (ACFTU 2015). Second, there are myriad studies that demonstrate how the ACFTU cannot balance the demands of stability with representation to produce effective enterprise-level trade unionism. We hold that analysis of case studies in which the ACFTU *is* able to address – if not resolve – its contradictory roles is also pertinent to understanding trade unionism in China and the potential for reform. In other words, knowledge of what the union can do some of the time is as important as understanding what it can't do most of time. Third, the key instrument underpinning our story is itself a hot topic in the recent literature: collective bargaining. The impact of its global decline on labor relations is well known and renders its surfacing in China – albeit in restricted form – a significant development.

The essence of our argument is that the careful construction of effective workplace unionism at YICT between 2007 and 2014 was the outcome of the SFTU engaging with

working class power manifested in the crane operators' capacity to disrupt production at an economically vital port. This was a complex process requiring skills that many trade union officers outside China will recognize. On the one hand, the SFTU and the YICT union exploited strikes and the threat of strikes to bring management to the bargaining table. On the other hand, the unions tamed militancy by developing a workplace union with the capacity to conduct collective bargaining but remain within China's labour laws that do not protect the right to strike but do not specifically prohibit strike action.

To explain this phenomenon, we draw on Wright's (2000) conceptualisations of 'structural power' and 'associational power'. Structural power results from the "location of workers within the economic system" (Wright, 2000: 962). Silver (2003) divides structural power into two subtypes she labels 'marketplace bargaining power' and 'workplace bargaining power'. The former is derived chiefly from labor and skill shortages and the latter from workers' location in key industrial sectors. 'Associational power' is defined as "the various forms of power that result from the formation of collective organizations of workers" (Wright 2000: 962) – a challenge in China to say the least. However, since 2003, Guangdong has experienced labor shortages awarding workers a degree of market-place bargaining power after two decades of a well-documented oversupply of labour. This development – among others – encouraged workers to organize strikes around issues of pay, working conditions, social insurance contributions and housing subsidy schemes. At YICT, crane operators were also able to draw on 'workplace bargaining power' by disrupting – and threatening to disrupt – the transport of goods to foreign consumer markets. We shed light on how the ACFTU engaged with working class power at the point of production by casting the relationship between structural power and associational power as a dialectical process in which the structural power of dock workers is 'tamed' in to a manifestation of 'associational power' acceptable to the Chinese system of labor relations. Our argument is supported by data derived from 37 semi-structured interviews chiefly with workers and trade union officials carried out over a total of three months in 2007 and 2011-2015.

Theoretically, our paper contributes an adaption of the sources of workers' power framework developed by Wright and Silver by applying it to an authoritarian setting. Empirically, the paper contributes to the literature on trade unions, labour conflicts and collective bargaining in China via a detailed discussion of a trade union-based collective bargaining project.

## Relevant Literature

An effective workplace trade union and annual collective bargaining is a rarity in China. While Chinese workers have established a reputation for striking, their actions have been largely defensive in nature with workers calling on local state authorities to discipline employers into operating in accordance with law – issuing wages on time, paying overtime, allowing days off and the like. Since 2010 however, a number of commentators have noted ‘an important qualitative shift underway in Chinese industrial unrest: labor going on the offensive’ (Elfstrom and Kuruvilla, 2014: 453). This has been reflected in workers’ demands: wages higher than the minimum wage – in some cases much higher – full payment of social insurance premiums and politically sensitive demands for improved representation (Elfstrom and Kuruvilla 2014; Chan and Hui 2014; Pringle 2011; Butollo and ten Brink 2012). The development seldom generates sustained collective bargaining and although workers have used structural power, it has not necessarily translated into gains in terms of associational power. This section will examine the relevant literature on strikes – mostly expressions of structural power; and collective bargaining – manifestations of associational power in China.

## Strikes

So-called “mass incidents” (*quntixing shijian*), the party-state’s umbrella term for larger strikes, protests, demonstrations and riots, increased from 8,700 to 180,000 cases of social unrest in 2010 (People’s Daily Online 2012). Commentators estimate about one third of these incidents are related to labor issues (Yu 2007; Wedemann 2009;). There are no available official figures on either the frequency or scale of strikes but independent strike maps based on traditional and social media reports indicate a significant upward trend in strikes and other forms of collective labor protest. (Elfstrom and Kuruvilla 2014).<sup>1</sup> Most commentators agree that strikes have emerged as an important response to workplace grievances over the last decade (Lee 2016; Pringle 2013; Gray 2015; Cao and Quan 2017; Chan and Hui 2012).

The rise in strikes was contextualised by important changes in state policy and the supply of labor. In 1995, China’s first national Labor Law codified workers’ rights at an individualized fixed-term contractual level (Pringle 2011) that privileged employers. From the mid-2000s, a change in policy was gradually implemented symbolized by the promulgation of the Labor Dispute Mediation and Arbitration Law (LDMAL) and the Labor

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<sup>1</sup> For example see China Labour Bulletin’s strike map at: <http://maps.clb.org.hk/strikes/en> and the crowd-funded China Strikes at <https://chinastrikes.crowdmap.com/>

Contract Law (LCL) in 2008 (Cooney et al 2013). Both laws were received as broadly labor-friendly and even as part of a top-down ‘collectivization of labor relations’ (Chang and Brown 2013). For example, the LCL stipulated permanent contracts for workers with ten years of continuous employment and devoted a whole chapter to collective contracts in contrast to the scant attention they received in the Labor Law. Gallagher, Giles, Park and Wang (2015) argue that the policy change had “likely contributed to reversing a trend toward increasing informalization of the urban labor market (181).

These ‘cognitive cues’ from the state (McAdam 1999 cited in Elfstrom and Kuruvilla 2014) and concomitant concessions from employers facing tight labor markets were not lost on a new generation of workers armed with a heightened awareness of the rights awarded by the aforementioned laws (Gallagher et al. 2013; Frenkel and Yu 2015). The resulting short wildcat strikes were successful (Friedman 2012; Pringle 2013) due in part to an increase in marketplace structural power for many workers as well as workplace bargaining power for those integrated into highly capitalized global supply chains such as port workers and auto workers. Guangdong province also led a secondary trend away from one- or two-day strikes (Elfstrom and Kuruvilla 2014). In 2010, a strike wave in the auto sector was kick-started by a 17-day strike at a Honda auto parts plant. The dispute ended with a pay rise of just under 30 per cent and symbolized the growing capacity of workers to organize and win strikes (Chan and Hui 2012; Lyddon, Cao, Meng and Lu 2015). In 2014, a strike involving up to 40,000 workers brought production to a halt for almost two weeks at the Yue Yuen shoe manufacturing complex as workers struck for higher wages and payment of long-accumulated arrears in social insurance payments amid fears of relocation (Schmalz 2017). Shoe workers were also behind a nine-month campaign for relocation compensation at the Li De shoe factory that involved three separate strikes and picket lines to prevent management moving machinery to a new site (Lin 2015). The militancy was not confined to factories. Between 2012 and 2014, sanitation workers in Guangzhou organized strikes and protests against the negative impacts of outsourcing on their benefits and pensions (Pringle 2017). For Lee, Brown and Wen (2016), “the notable change since the strike wave of 2010 is that strikes tend not be about rights but about interests” (222). Chen and Tang (2013) present a three-part typology of labor conflict involving disputes over “rights”, disputes over “interests” and “pre-reform entitlement, which blurs rights and interests” (560). They argue that the emergence of collectivized “interest-based resistance... is rooted in distributional conflict in the capitalist

economy and so can be recurrent...[and]... have some important implications for both labor and government” (583).

In general this manifestation of structural power has not led to associational power and there are very few examples of effective enterprise trade unions. The absence of alternative trade unions has left the task of forming a coherent strike narrative to the ACFTU, something that was simply was not going to happen under existing conditions. While social media and LNGO trainings facilitated the exchange of strike experiences (Pringle 2017), this hardly made up for the lack of a “unifying force of a trade union” (Elfstrom and Kuruvilla, 2014: 458). At enterprise level, trade unions remain weak and reliant on employers (Pringle and Clarke 2011; Friedman and Kuruvilla 2015). In general, unions in the private sector have been established via collaboration between management and higher level unions seeking to meet pre-set targets for union density. Potential associational power was further undermined by the widespread practice of appointing rather than electing workplace representatives (Hui and Chan 2015). Trade union elections have been piloted in the provinces of Guangdong and Zhejiang (Pringle 2011; Chan and Hui 2015) but remain very much the exception and are often manipulated by management anyway.

The generalised absence effective workplace trade unions and the presence of structural power has been responsible for an increased interest in collective bargaining, especially as the LCL seem to open up opportunities for pilots. To date, it has emerged chiefly as a one-off dispute settlement instrument but there have been examples of a more institutionalized approach.

### **Collective bargaining**

The principal institutional expression of collective negotiation in China is ‘collective consultation’. The system substitutes power imbalances in the workplace for “a consensual approach with a presumption of equal status between the parties” (Tsui and Carver 2006: 469). This abstract notion of equality between labor and capital allegedly results in ‘win-win’ collective contracts covering millions of workers. Clarke, Lee and Li (2004) noted that the contracts at best reproduced minimum labor standards and sometimes even undermined them. There is not much evidence to disagree with this early observation and this probably explains why more than 54 per cent of the Chinese firms were covered by collective wage contract in 2011 (ACFTU 2012 ). In 2013, the ACFTU claimed 27 of China’s 31 provinces had passed

new regulations on collective consultation and democratic management (Lee, Brown and Wen 2016).

While labor unrest remained defensive, little attention was paid to collective consultation and policy focussed on individualized grievance resolution. But as strikes become more frequent, demands went beyond the economic realm and began to address the issue of representation i.e. associational power. Lee et al (2016) found that “collective action by young migrant workers is testing the boundaries of the existing industrial relations arrangements” (231). Enterprise-level collective bargaining in the Dalian Development Zone (DDZ) involved the district-level trade union negotiating directly with the Japanese Association of Businesses to fix minimum and maximum standards for annual wage increases in the zone within which enterprise-level unions negotiate (Quan 2012). Friedman and Kuruvilla (2015) view such innovations as “experimentation” promoted by the state “in order to contain unrest” (182) but their impact is weakened on the one hand by the “highly decentralized approach” (192) adopted by state and on the other hand by the lack of accountability to the workers they covered (Pringle 2011). Following Silver, Chan and Hui (2014) accept that globalization awards structural power to workers in some sectors in China. However, they argue that the outcome to date has been ‘Party-led bargaining’, a model that excludes the mutual concessions of Wright’s “negative collective bargaining”. Consequently, workers’ interests are “unlikely” to be represented as it is “the political power of the state rather than the power of workers’ associations that drives employers to the negotiating table” (228).

Two very different models of collective bargaining have emerged in Guangdong: annual collective bargaining and one-off ‘closure bargaining’. Less relevant to our paper, closure bargaining – sometimes referred to as ‘relocation bargaining’ (Pringle 2015) – is a one-off form of collective dispute resolution pioneered by labour NGOs (LNGO) with minimum involvement of trade unions. It evolved as a response to volatile strikes arising from factory closures or relocations driven by increased wage costs and a provincial state policy of industrial upgrading (Butollo 2013). Scenarios vary, but as a rule of thumb informally elected worker representatives bargain agreements with employers, sometimes with the encouragement of the local state and trade union (Pringle 2017; Chan 2013). In



closure bargaining, the union is unlikely to play a major role, chiefly as there is little long term gain to be derived from doing so.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to closure bargaining, annual collective bargaining has focused chiefly on wages. It emerged in expanding, capital-intensive sectors such as the ports or automobile sector populated by profitable enterprises linked to the global economy (Cao and Quan 2017). For example, a small but significant number of elected trade union committees have emerged in the province's auto sector and the more active representatives continue to meet regularly to prepare for bargaining rounds with their respective employers.<sup>3</sup> These reps "demonstrate a stunning sense of agency or capacity to act" (Quan 2013: 69) and are learning the lessons of collective bargaining. As an elected representative from the Baimu auto parts factory explained following a bargaining session:

'Afterwards I spoke to the membership about how we could strengthen the union. I said we should continually publicize information about collective bargaining among our members and also make sure that the bargaining committee reports to the rank and file on a timely and accurate basis so that workers' voices are heard in the negotiations and that union members can 'own' the process of collective bargaining' (Quan 2013: 67).

Guangzhou's former trade union chairman Chen Weiguang is well-known for his support for collective bargaining. According to Chen (2013), the median collectively negotiated pay rise in six Guangzhou-based wholly-owned auto parts factories was 15 per cent for the period 2011-2012 with an average wage of RMB 3256 for frontline (*yixian*) shop floor workers – excluding deputy supervisors and above – over double the minimum wage in 2013. In larger, more capital-intensive joint venture auto assembly plants, the median wage increase over the same period was 19 per cent – but with higher differentials – and an average wage of RMB 5834. How are we to understand these phenomena occurring in Chinese conditions?

### **Argument: Sources of Workers' Power.**

Wright (2000) identifies three spheres of class struggle: exchange (labor markets), production (labor process), and politics (political parties – and by implication state policy and

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<sup>2</sup> Interview: F02, Labor Academic, Guangzhou, 06/23/2013.

<sup>3</sup> Interview: F03, Autoworker and trade union representative, Foshan, 07/24/2013.



legislation). He constructs a model of class compromise in which coercion is “not continually deployed actively to control people’s actions” (Wright 2000: 964) and allows for both negative and positive forms of class compromise, in which the former is based on “collective bargaining as mutual concessions” – as occurred at YICT – and the latter “positive-sum social pacts: Keynesianism; neocorporatism” (Wright 2000). Key drivers of this compromise are sources of power possessed – more or less – by workers. Wright’s discussion of class compromise was developed in the context of liberal democracy where independent trade unions have a hard-fought history of translating structural power into associational power. Conditions in China make this transition extremely difficult.

For Friedman (2014a), Chinese workers’ structural power is trapped by state authoritarianism. He argues that the progression from the fruits of labor militancy towards the institutionalization of working class representation – associational power – is interrupted by the absence of a labor movement and the consequent inability of a ‘disorganized insurgency’ to link cause and effect. While strikes have generated paternalistic state reforms to labor relations that are friendly towards labor – such as the LCL – workers themselves (and here Friedman is referring to migrant workers) are alienated from the “political object they themselves have produced” (Friedman 2014b: 1001). The ACFTU undermines working class power through ‘appropriated representation’ and in the process short-circuits the transition from insurgency to institutionalization of working class representation. These conclusions exclude the possibility of effective annual collective bargaining as workers are unable to rationalize demands beyond an insurgent moment, or an endless series of them. The possibility of building an effective enterprise-level trade union is rendered theoretically impossible.

We argue that is not the case and effective enterprise unionism as measured by the process and outcomes of collective bargaining is an important marker on China’s labor relations terrain in China – albeit at the frontiers. We agree with Liu (2013) that union organizing is not monolithic and that trade union approaches to representation, organizing and bargaining are embedded within specific contexts. Friedman and Kuruvilla (2013) illustrate the state’s engagement in experimentation and decentralization. Lee et al (2016) present diverse models of practice even as the state reaffirms its commitment to the ACFTU’s monopoly on organizing. YICT was an important manifestation of this diversity in that it provided an opportunity to learn how one of the most reform-minded trade union federations

in China – the SFTU – responded to militant dockworkers who seemed to be holding up the historical reputation of militancy on the waterfront (Kerr and Siegel 1954; Turnbull 2000).

Adapting Wright’s conceptualizations, we present the relationship between the two sources of power not as one that is “contrasted” (Wright 2000: 962) but as both dynamic and dialectical. By this we mean that although associational power in China is constrained by the monopolistic system of Party-led trade unionism, the crane operators’ structural power required the ACFTU to develop an effective – and responsive – enterprise trade union in which associational power was not entirely appropriated as argued by Friedman. We show how skilful and elected union reps at YICT worked with the higher-level SFTU to tame and mediate working class power into collective bargaining procedures that permitted dissent “but on a small scale and within a limited context” (Crouch 1982: 108).

We both draw on, and to a certain extent challenge, Friedman’s extension of Weber’s “appropriated representation” to labor relations in China by framing the key question as one of working class power rather than state power. Friedman draws on fieldwork to conclude that “appropriated representation” strengthens the hand of the ACFTU at the national level but does nothing to alleviate the key issue of weak enterprise unions. Instead, it “results in weak, illegitimate unions on the shop floor that are generally incapable of enforcing laws and collective agreements” (Friedman 2014a: 23). While not disagreeing with these findings in relation to the cases studied by Friedman, the argument does not capture developments on the events at YICT.

Our data suggests that SFTU officials simultaneously constructed a variety of associational power and operationalized collective bargaining. In bringing a dialectical extension to Wright’s theory of sources of working class power and Silver’s interpretation of it, we argue that the prohibition of freedom of association does not exclude the possibility of a degree of associational power constructed under the guidance of the SFTU. This scenario differs from appropriated representation precisely because it does *not* exclude the possibility of effective workplace trade unionism.

## **Methodology**

We selected YICT as a case study for two reasons. First, events at the port provided an opportunity to examine key aspects of China’s evolving labor relations system during a significant period of change between 2007 and 2015. Two strikes separated by union activity at a specific workplace allowed us to gather qualitative data on the agency of workers,

collective bargaining and trade union reform spread over time. Second, YICT's low rates of labor turnover and better pay and conditions reflected significant levels of structural power that acted as a catalyst for trade union innovation following the first strike. Strikes in Guangdong have traditionally been followed by collective exit (Lee 2007), sometimes voluntary, sometimes forced, but this was not the case at YICT.

We deploy a qualitative approach that brings together data gleaned from three separate rounds of fieldwork. The first data set was compiled in 2007 as part of an ESRC project examining trade unions and low pay in Russia, China and Vietnam (ESRC RES-155-25-0071). This fieldwork was supervised by one of the present authors, directed by one of China's foremost labor scholars and carried out by senior researchers employed at academic institutions in Guangdong. It included interviews with a middle manager at YICT, a deputy chair of the SFTU, a YICT union committee member and an worker involved in the strike as well as access to SFTU reports. The main fieldwork was conducted in the summer months of 2012/13 and the data enriched in follow up interviews conducted in 2014/15. Thirty-three semi-structured interviews were conducted during the period, each lasting between one and two hours. In planning the size of our sample we were primarily guided by Kvale's observation to "interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know" (1996: 101). Although our interviews were semi-structured, we were influenced by Taylor, Bogdan and DeVault's description of using in-depth interviews to "understanding informants' perspectives...on situations" (2016:102) at which we were not present. The foci of the interviews were the organizing of the YICT union, union elections, the union's preparation and participation in collective bargaining, the outcomes of collective bargaining and the role of the SFTU throughout these period. Interviews were conducted in neutral venues away from the workplace or union office and were coded to ensure anonymity. While some interviewees expressed no objection to being named, we have kept all interviewees anonymous to maintain consistency. An anonymized list of the interviews is provided in the appendix. Finally, we draw widely on official government trade union and company documents, academic papers, newspaper and web reports. All secondary resources are in English or Chinese and draw mainly on sociological and labor relations literature. We have attempted to process the tensions that undoubtedly exist between sociological and labor relations literature into a research plan that links union organization to working class militancy.

We acknowledge two important shortcomings to our method. First, access to senior managers was limited and did not yield management views on the process of collective bargaining beyond their general acceptance of it. As our focus is the union itself, we believe that the absence of management's voice in this paper does not seriously undermine our argument. Second, due to time constraints, the interviews with union officials, bargaining reps and crane operators focused on the development of a union branch that was able to participate actively in collective bargaining and function accordingly. This was at the expense of gathering data on the relationships between union members and the union reps. We think that this shortcoming is in part justified by the paper's focus on the strategy, tactics and outcomes of collective bargaining driven by structural and the construction of a degree of associational power rather than the day-to-day operation of the union (although this is not entirely excluded).

### **Results: Strikes and annual collective bargaining at YICT**

YICT is a joint-venture company owned by Shenzhen Yantian Port Company (SYPC) and Hutchison Port Holdings (HPH). In 2005, HPH controlled 65 per cent of the company stock and SYPC 35 per cent. The latter had no influence on management at the port or the collective bargaining that emerged after the 2007 strike. YICT is part of a chain of nine ports in the Shenzhen Ports Association (SPA), currently chaired by Lin Qingwen, YICT's managing director. YICT's growth has been particularly spectacular, climbing from number 35 to fourth place in international rankings between 1997 and 2007, the year of the first strike discussed in this paper, and third place in 2013, when the second strike occurred. In the same period the number of standard containers processed rose 17-fold from 638,000 to 10,796,000 (YICTa). As illustrated in the graph below, YICT is by far the most important of the nine terminals in the SPA.

As of 2013, YICT employed over two thousand people as managers, administrators, office workers, engineers, controllers, crane operators, container loaders and machine operators. In line with a division of labor that has been standardized via containerization (Turnbull and Sapsford 2001), physical work is divided into three categories: gantry and tower crane operators, cargo transfer drivers and fork lift operators and less skilled assistants. Nearly all are long-term migrants from other areas of China. Most of the crane operators were employed on three-year contracts that covered all five aspects of social and labor insurance categories, barring maternity leave insurance. YICT crane operators earned considerably

more than manufacturing or service sector workers. The minimum wage in Shenzhen in 2013 was RMB 1600 – slightly less in the outer zones of the city. Immediately prior to the 2013 strike, gantry crane operators were paid between RMB 7000 and 8000 per month and tower crane operators ranged from RMB 6000 to 7000 per month. After the strike, these levels increased to ranges of RMB 8200 and 9200 for the former and RMB 7200 to 8200 for the latter.

ADD FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The terminal operates on a 24-hour basis across three shifts. The first strike at YICT spanned shifts across 7-8 April 2007. It was in part inspired by strikes in March at two of YICT's supplier companies, one of which was contracted to load and unload ships within the YICT terminal (Cao and Meng 2017). Another strike by 180 crane operators at nearby Shekou port had secured a significant wage increase (Ren and Xu 2008). The YICT crane operators' demands were both economic and political: a tactically huge wage increase of RMB 5000 per month pushed by radical voices among the workforce on the basis of the growth in the number of containers processed and rising cost of living. Second, a paid lunchbreak as YICT deducted half-an-hour's pay for breaks. Third, management should not take any action against strikers after the dispute; and fourth, the workers permitted to form a primary trade union independent from management with elected trade union representatives paid for directly out of the members' wages. This would replace the existing 'staff association' that was referred to disparagingly by most manual workers at YICT as a 'white collar club' (ESRC case study 2008).

Workers gathered in the storage yard of the terminal, where they were able to block the movement of goods already unloaded or due to be loaded on to ships. Our interviews suggest that the strike was supported by all 280 crane operators and that at least 14 cargo ships were immediately affected by the strike (ESRC case study 2008). One striker later recalled that although workers were acutely aware of their ability to interrupt the shipment of exports, the strike itself was "more or less spontaneous and our demands were not presented."<sup>4</sup> For their part, management viewed the workers' linking of their pay levels with increased turnover and profitability as "irrational" and stressed that working conditions at

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<sup>4</sup> Interview: B06, Worker1, YICT, Beijing, 25/07/2012

YICT were well within the law.<sup>5</sup> SFTU representatives rushed to the scene and set about mediating a reduction in tension and a return to work based on meeting the strikers' demands. They secured a meeting with management, stressed the need to compromise (Wang 2014) and persuaded strikers to elect ten temporary representatives to negotiate with management under the guidance of official T, a very senior figure in the SFTU.

The involvement of the SFTU produced a three per cent increase for all workers and a significant RMB 500 monthly subsidy for working at height. Management also agreed to pay an extra half-an-hour wages for each working day to cover the lunch break. These changes constituted a victory and one that we have calculated from relevant legal documents as being worth approximately RMB 48 million in direct benefit to YICT employees.<sup>6</sup> The demand for direct funding of union representatives was rejected by both management and the SFTU as it violated trade union law. However, as we will see, tension at YICT did not disappear and some employees felt that the reduced differentials between crane operators and engineers privileged the former at the expense of the latter (Wang 2014; Cao and Meng 2017).

The potency of the strike and the workers' demands convinced SFTU leaders that they were dealing with considerable levels of structural power possessed by a stable workforce demanding effective representation that could, if mishandled, threaten the status quo and as such require the deployment of force. Such an outcome would further damage the credibility of the ACFTU in the eyes of both workers and the CCP leaders – the pincers of pressure of from below and above that we identified in the introduction. The situation kick-started the SFTU into organizing a trade union at YICT precisely to carefully establishing associational power that relieved the pressure but didn't threaten the ACFTU's monopoly. Under Official T's leadership, 12 full time SZFTU experienced officials met with 796 YICT employees organised into 113 consultation groups tasked with collating workers' opinions and electing a trade union committee that would represent union members' interests in regular negotiations with management. The impact of this organising drive was that 2225 YICT employees – a unionisation rate of 95 per cent – joined the union and a mid-level manager, WZQ, was elected chair of a trade union committee that included five full-time trade union officials paid for by YICT. Interviews conducted after the second strike suggested that the election of a manager as chair reflected workers' concerns regarding access to management policy and data as well as a degree management manipulation also reflected in

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<sup>5</sup> Interview: B05, Enterprise Trade Union Official5, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2012

<sup>6</sup> Documents on file with authors

strike-driven elections elsewhere (Chan and Hui 2015). While it is probably too late to verify the degree of manipulation, Cao and Meng nevertheless argue that the election “signalled that grassroots union reform became possible” (2017: 6). Once in place, a Shenzhen labor law firm was invited by the union to assist in the demand for paid lunch breaks and also provided support to the workplace union in the early rounds of annual collective bargaining that followed the dispute.<sup>7</sup>

The election of a workplace trade union committee in accordance with the regulations and with the support of the SFTU persuaded the YICT management agree to annual collective bargaining beginning in October of each year with results announced by the union in December. In the first two years of bargaining, the union side secured pay increases of 8 and 9 per cent respectively, although in 2009 complaints from union members concerning the poor bargaining techniques of some union negotiators led WZQ to change his bargaining team – a separate body from the trade union committee – by bringing in more experienced workers. WZQ’s reasoning was that some of the original workers’ representatives on the collective bargaining team had been elected on the basis of radical demands such as the original demand for a huge wage rise rather than a demonstrable capacity for negotiating based on empirical realities.<sup>8</sup> Given the contradictory pressures that challenge ACFTU credibility, WZQ demonstrated tactical skill, prioritising carefully prepared bargaining tactics over radical sloganeering. His successor as YICT union chair recalled WZQ’s tactical approach to bargaining: “we won’t be too hard in words but show our power in practice”.<sup>9</sup>

Threats of further strikes continued in the light of what both workers and SFTU saw as incompetent management (Wang 2014).<sup>10</sup> The lunch hour issue had been resolved but pay differentials rooted in a productivity-based nine-grade pay system remained an issue. There was also discontent around contributions to Shenzhen’s recently introduced housing provident scheme that was to spark the second strike in 2013. Some YICT workers still viewed strikes as more effective than the annual bargaining procedures. As one crane operator put it “[R]epresentation is not power. Strikes are power”.<sup>11</sup> The 2007 strike had been restricted to crane operators but the economic gains won had left a deep impression on other workers at the terminal (Cao and Quan 2017).

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<sup>7</sup> Interview: E01, Lawyer1, LW, Shenzhen, 12/23/2014

<sup>8</sup> Interview C03, Enterprise Trade Union Official 3, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013

<sup>9</sup> Interview: C01, Enterprise Trade Union Official 1, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013

<sup>10</sup> Interview: C10, Municipal Trade Union Official1, SZFTU, Shenzhen, 08/22/2013

<sup>11</sup> Interview: D04, Worker3, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/24/2015



Again reflecting workers' concerns over union access to company information, a mid-level manager from the finance department, WDC, was elected as the new trade union chair in 2010. The indirect competition to the 21-member union committee was decided by a vote of 153 workplace representatives, elected by various workers' groups formed on the basis of job spec and included some management posts. These representatives voted in the union chair and the rest of the committee was elected by dividing the 153 worker representatives into five groups of between 27 and 32 members with four groups made up of frontline workers and one group for managers. These groups then recommended and voted on candidates. WDC was aware of the potential for militancy and embarked on a strategy of getting workers more involved in preparations for the annual collective bargaining sessions partly as a way of diverting it. At the same time, he increased pressure on management by ensuring that his members were cognizant of ongoing strike waves around China's coastal export zones. WDC mobilized workers to collect data on wages and welfare benefits at SPA ports<sup>12</sup> and included both moderate and radical workers in the negotiation team, adroitly combining the threat of militancy with exposing weaknesses in the management bargaining strategies and datasets.<sup>13</sup> He summed up his approach as follows:

“We understood that the employer wanted to use the negotiations as an opportunity to gauge workers' attitudes and evaluate the possibility of strike action. Consequently, we made the impact of the increasing cost of living on members very clear [to management] and also deliberately gave room for more aggressive workers to voice their complaints.”<sup>14</sup>

These tactics paid off as the annual bargaining sessions in 2010 generated a 10 per cent wage rise. WDC improved communication between the union and members, especially during the bargaining season. He organized four meetings with YICT workers' representatives during this period and encouraged union reps to communicate information to members. The trade union committee publicized the proceedings from all bargaining sessions so that workers knew what position the union was taking.<sup>15</sup> WDC also made attempts to extend the agenda to health and safety-related issues. In short, this was an effective union branch improving pay

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<sup>12</sup> Interview: B01, Enterprise Trade Union Official1, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/23/2012

<sup>13</sup> Interview: B02, Enterprise Trade Union Official2, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/23/2012

<sup>14</sup> Interview: C01, Enterprise Trade Union Official1, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013

<sup>15</sup> Interview: C05, Worker1, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013; Interview: C07, Worker3, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013

and conditions via an institutionalized system of collective bargaining conducted through representatives with some legitimacy in the eyes of union members.

The collective bargaining rounds in 2011 and 2012 resulted in lower pay rises of eight and five per cent respectively. Despite discontent with WDC among some crane operators, he held his position as union chair in the 2012 union elections reflecting members' acknowledgement that his skills as a negotiator<sup>16</sup> rather than group dynamics among the workers. Nevertheless, high wage differentials, lower annual wage increases, poor implementation of housing provident scheme and occupational health concerns from older employees in particular led to a second strike.<sup>17</sup> On September 1, 2013, crane operators struck and this time the action spread to the entire workforce with a demand for an across-the-board 2000-3000 RMB wage rise. Some crane operators remained unhappy with the productivity-based and divisive nine-grade wage system that promoted competition for top-paying manual jobs and differences in take-home pay of as much as 30 per cent (Wang 2014). Prior to the strike, the union had succeeded in settling a work stoppage following a sudden change in working conditions but this only seemed to increase the readiness to strike as many workers recalled how effective the 2007 strike had been.<sup>18</sup> Led by approximately 200 crane operators, workers marched around the port office building and then gathered in the dining hall and union office to discuss their tactics.

As in 2007, the tension seemed to paralyse management and YICT union reps acted as go-betweens, carrying messages between strikers and management. The first negotiation session lasted from two o'clock in the afternoon until midnight with little progress: management refused to make significant concessions and workers' demands lacked consistency.<sup>19</sup> One former member of the union's collective bargaining team recalled: "we tried to mediate but the workers refused to make concessions, while the company held its line quite firmly as well".<sup>20</sup> The next morning most supporting and control room staff also stopped work and it became clear that left to their own devices, the YICT union and management would not be able to reach a settlement. SFTU officials entered the negotiations led by Official T who had been in contact with WDC since his election in 2010. The SFTU

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<sup>16</sup> Interview: C01, Enterprise Trade Union Official1, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013

<sup>17</sup> Interview: D02, Worker1, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/24/2015; Interview: D03, Worker2, YICT, Shenzhen, 24/07/2015; Interview: D04, Worker3, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/24/2015

<sup>18</sup> Interview: B06, Worker1, YICT, Shenzhen, 25/07/2012; Interview: B07, Worker2, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/25/2012

<sup>19</sup> Interview: C14, Municipal Trade Union Official4, SZFTU, Shenzhen, 11/12/2013; Interview: D01, Enterprise Trade Union Official1, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/23/2015

<sup>20</sup> Interview: B05, Enterprise Trade Union Official5, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/23/2012

team were critical of management but also expressed frustration towards members who opted to strike rather than go through established negotiation procedures. WDC recalled that Official T reminded the workers that annual collective bargaining had produced “increases in workers’ wages of up to 58 per cent when you compare 2007 wages with 2013”. This, he argued “was a relatively sound annual wage increase” (Wang 2014). After several rounds of negotiations, during which the SFTU cajoled, persuaded and at times threatened the strikers with consequences “beyond our control” (Wang 2014), significant concessions were made by management and the strike ended at 4 o’clock in the afternoon. The agreement awarded all workers with a 30 per cent pay rise and RMB 5000 as a back-to-work bonus.

Our results show how the SFTU facilitated the establishment of an effective workplace trade union at YICT that involved workers, did not win everything, but won a lot. This success involved hands-on guidance from the higher union especially in the early part of the process. The development of annual collective bargaining was greatly assisted by the election of two skilful trade union chairs who deployed various tactics to ensure that workers’ demands were at least partly met and strikes avoided. In 2013, external factors such as the reform to the housing provident scheme and internal discontent with wage differentials and lower wage rises led to a second strike. This dispute again pulled in the SFTU who mediated in negotiations that ended in substantial economic concessions by YICT management.

## **Discussion**

If we apply Wright’s conceptualizations of working class power as static categories we are left with a legalistic and equally fixed conclusion: China prohibits freedom of association and this rules out the existence of any degree of associational power. Such an application does not help us understand what happened at YICT, or indeed at other workplaces where effective workplace trade unions – more or less – have emerged. Conversely, if we accept a dialectical relationship between structural power and associational power, an opportunity emerges to make sense of both why and how collective bargaining may take place in China despite the obvious constraints.

Marketplace structural power at YICT was premised on labor shortages. As discussed in the literature review, this form of structural power can generate union intervention, but it rarely translates down to accountability such as trade union elections, recall of representatives or annual collective bargaining in the context of strikes or threats of strikes. One of the reasons behind this is the fact that even successful strikes are frequently followed by an

exodus of strikers – especially among activists workers. This may be a result of “exit solidarity” (Lee C.K. 2007: 175), the availability of higher wages elsewhere (Liu 2010) or fear of reprisals (Pringle 2011). In other words, structural power is deployed to pursue a short-term economic aim but it is only recently that demands have moved beyond rights into the realm of interests (Chen and Tang 2013) that test the parameters of labor relations in China (Lee et al 2016). Exodus did not happen at YICT, labor turnover was minimal and none of the crane operators were more vulnerable agency workers (Wang 2008). These conditions increased solidarity in the 2007 strike and, importantly, during the years of collective bargaining leading up to the second strike in 2013.

SFTU priorities were the same at both strikes. First, get the workers back to work and reduce the disruptive impact of their workplace bargaining power. Union officials were only too aware that “while the operation was stopped, huge numbers of containers were left in the port without being inspected or loaded/unloaded” (Cao and Quan 2017: 8). Second, channel the structural power possessed by YICT’s crane operators in particular in to a carefully calibrated degree of associational power. One of the original demands during the first strike in 2007 was to elect a union committee paid for directly by workers – an attempt by strikers to transform structural power into an autonomous form of associational power directly underpinned by union dues that went way beyond the parameters identified by Lee et al (2016).

During the strikes, the SFTU exploited its links with the Shenzhen government to pressure management into negotiating an end to the strike and accept annual collective bargaining without scapegoating strike leaders. Previously, the union had invited and impressed the powerful mayor of Shenzhen to inspect enterprises where industrial harmony had been sustained via collective negotiations, eliciting government support for their work. The SFTU’s second priority can be understood via the relationship between structural power and the associational power constructed at YICT. The higher union successfully mediated in negotiations with management, and established a trade union committee. It deployed officials in a widespread consultation with the workforce and succeeded in persuading YICT to pay the wages of five full-time officials that would prepare the way for collective bargaining and the selection of union negotiators.

In contrast to one-off closure bargaining, annual collective bargaining needed to draw on members’ structural power in order to keep management at the table over successive rounds of bargaining. This required an effective trade union at least partially accepted by the

members in return for limited accountability via union elections and respectable bargaining outcomes. This development of a degree of associational power, albeit qualified by the Chinese context, was grounded in crane operators' awareness of their power strengthened by years of working together. This in turn facilitated a collective narrative and memory of militancy among union members feared by YICT management – justifiably as it turned out. Indeed, memory of the positive outcomes of the 2007 strike contributed to the rapid spread of the crane operators' strike to the whole workforce during the second strike in 2013. The strong bonds among workers at YICT, echoing specific characteristics of portside communities (Kerr and Seigel 1954) combined with the YICT union chair's ability to channel dissatisfaction arising from "antagonisms between capital and labor" (Turnbull and Sapsford 2001: 253) into an acceptable form of associational power and collective bargaining. In doing so, both union chairs drew on, and, on occasion manipulated the support of union and bargaining reps that no doubt influenced the various departments and shops.

Solidarity around a waterfront narrative of class interests – the seeds of associational power – was alternately reinforced and manipulated by the SFTU higher union as well as WZQ and his successor WDC. The YICT union chairs ensured that management was aware of the ongoing militant feelings of the workforce by re-arranging the composition of collective bargaining teams from militant to more 'rational' negotiators and *vice versa* depending on the conditions. Both union committee members and the team of collective bargaining representatives faced the twin-edged challenge of rationalizing workers' demands into a format that management would negotiate and achieving outcomes acceptable to their members. WDC in particular was prepared to manipulate the collective bargaining teams so as to exclude 'radicals' when he thought it was strategically necessary, and bring more 'rational' employees on board. When this meant excluding crane operators he did so even at the risk of further strikes – as the 2013 strike demonstrates – and even the trade union itself. For WDC the key to overcoming these risks was communication between the union and members.

"Workers often said that the union is useless... but the motivation behind the formation of YICT's union was the strike and this is what links workers with the union and makes them count on it – despite what they say. For sure, the workers always expected us to be more aggressive towards management... But despite the

criticisms, we can make this work through rational analysis and communication with the workers.”<sup>21</sup>

It is worth remembering that even when dissatisfaction with annual negotiations was running high, no candidates came forward to replace WDC. Part of the reason for this was his inclusion of members in preparations for the bargaining even when they criticized the union for not communicating sufficiently with them.<sup>22</sup> Our interviewees noted that there had been a gradual increase in awareness of the need for sustained solidarity and support for collective bargaining was “absolutely necessary at this stage.”<sup>23</sup>

“Yes, our solidarity has improved significantly. From January to October [when collective bargaining begins] almost all workers discuss trade union and collective consultation without any prompting. In the past, we only grumbled to each other. We have all changed a lot.”<sup>24</sup>

We find that this change represents awareness among crane operators and their union reps that associational power is important to successful collective bargaining. In Wright’s notion of “negative class compromise” mutual concessions are offered by both capital and labor during collective bargaining. In our adaption of this concept to Chinese conditions, the enterprise trade union is necessarily involved in a process of institutionalization of collective bargaining. For workers the focus was on improving pay and conditions and standing up to management using their own collective power. For management, the focus was continued production and a stable environment as free of militancy as possible. And for the SFTU, the priority was to channel the workers’ structural power underpinning the militant mood and strikes into an acceptable degree of associational power appropriate to its dual functions of upholding stability and protecting members’ rights and interests.

Extending Wright’s (2000) concept of associational power to Chinese conditions does not remove the threat of state coercion. But the whole point was to avoid it such a scenario by operationalizing collective bargaining as an instrument of class compromise between

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<sup>21</sup> Interview: C01, Enterprise Trade Union Official1, YICT, Shenzhen, 08/05/2013

<sup>22</sup> Interview: D04, Worker3, YICT, Shenzhen, 07/24/2015

<sup>23</sup> Interview: C06, Worker2, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

<sup>24</sup> Interview: C09, Worker5, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

opposing interests. A wholesale ‘appropriation’ of associational power (Freidman 2013) would have risked incurring the high costs of brute force with a zero sum outcome – no effective workplace trade union, and no collective bargaining, and a negative impact on government support for the SFTU’s work. In sum, the annual bargaining and the strikes at YICT that bookend our research time period required a degree of associational power premised on very high levels of structural power and the manipulation of the relationship between these two sources of working class power at a given historical moment. In the run-up to the second strike, union members’ grievances had increased to a point that the YICT union was unable to contain the threat of strike action. This prompted the intervention of SFTU officials anxious to prevent the strike from spreading to other ports.<sup>25</sup> Fear of such a domino effect was heightened by the 40-day strike by crane operators at Hong Kong Terminals (HIT) in 2012 that had received widespread coverage in the Chinese media and directed negative attention towards HPH, the company that part-owns both HIT and YICT. On the other hand, the strike at HIT – only 50 miles from YICT – put HPH on the back foot, further strengthening SFTU’s room to force through significant concessions to end the strike – Wright’s ‘negative class compromise’ in action.

## Conclusion

The events at YICT constitute an important innovation in the Chinese context of weak enterprise-level trade unions and the abstractions of the established form of collective negotiation known as ‘collective consultation’. To explain these phenomena, we have drawn on Silver’s two sub-categories of Wright’s notion of ‘structural power’ and extended the latter’s conceptualisation of ‘associational power’ to Chinese circumstances.

We have argued that the annual bargaining and strikes at YICT demanded a *degree* of associational power premised on very high levels of structural power and the manipulation of the relationship between these two sources of working class power at a given historical moment. The outcome was a taming of this power. Our analysis differs from Friedman’s (2014) ‘appropriated representation’ in that it recognizes that effective workplace trade unions as measured by the process and outcome of annual collective bargaining are part of the Chinese industrial relations landscape. Chan and Hui argue that it is the power of the state and not workers’ associational power that forces employers to bargain collectively and that

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<sup>25</sup> As Cao and Quan (2017) argue, the second strike occurred in the aftermath of the three-week Hong Kong dock strike that was ‘inspirational for colleagues around the world, certainly including those in Yantian’.



this means workers' interests are unlikely to be represented. The evidence from our case study leads us to invert this view and argue that workers' structural power was bent into an acceptable form of associational power constructed under the leadership of the AFTU. In this scenario, workers' interests were represented and workers' interest in associational power – trade unions – increased as a consequence.

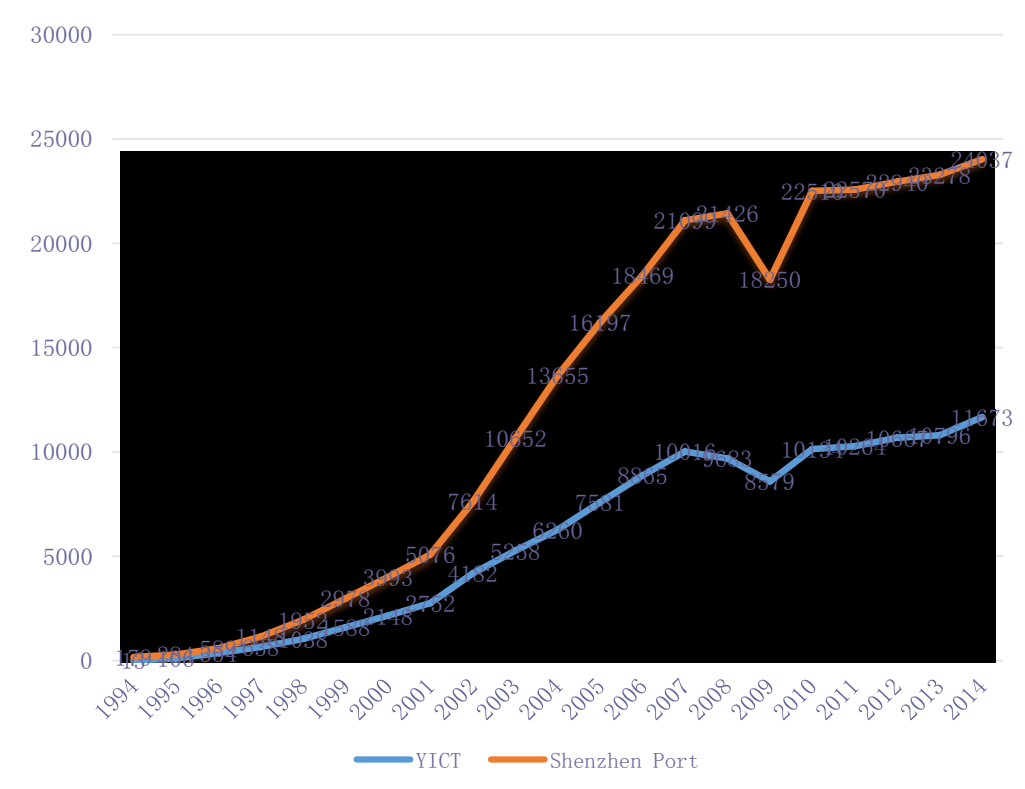
The limitations of our argument lie in the extent of generalization and changes in the political environment since our fieldwork ended. These limitations may well be linked. It remains to be seen if the effective workplace trade union developed at YICT will drive the development of effective workplace trade unionism at other highly capitalized sites in China or indeed survive at YICT. Guangzhou's auto sector aside, there is no evidence to suggest replication of the success elsewhere although the project has been recognized by the provincial government as pioneering example of "combining grassroots creativity" with "top-down design".<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the possibility of generalization may be lowered by the recent change in both political and economic conditions. Since our research, state policy has focused on reducing China's dependency on exports and strengthening Party control. This *may* reduce the space for innovative responses to labor unrest we have analysed here. It remains to be seen how the ACFTU will respond to President Xi Jinping's call for reform. In the meantime, effective workplace trade unionism stands as an emergent if rare beast.

Figure 1

*Numbers of containers processed at YICT and all SPA ports. Unit: 1000/TEU*

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<sup>26</sup> See Jin Yang Wang. 2015. 'Fayang "shouchuang jingsheng" duijie "jingceng sheji"' (Link grassroots creativity with top-down design). [http://news.ycwb.com/2015-11/11/content\\_20861940.htm](http://news.ycwb.com/2015-11/11/content_20861940.htm). Accessed August 8, 2017.



Source: YICTb

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## Appendix: Anonymized Interview

### 2007

Interview 1: Mr. W, Deputy Chair of SFTU, Shenzhen, June 2007

Interview 2: Mr. X, Academic, Zhongshan University, Guangzhou, June 2007

Interview 3: Mr S, YICT middle manager, Shenzhen, June 2007

Interview 4: Mr Z, YICT union member, Shenzhen, June 2007

### 2011-2015

Interview: A01, Mr. W, Enterprise Trade Union Chair, YICT, Beijing, 22/05/2011

Interview: A02, Ms W, Office Director of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Beijing, 22/05/2011

Interview: B01, Mr. W, Enterprise Trade Union Chair, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2012

Interview: B02, Ms W, Office Director of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2012

Interview: B03, Mr. CL, Deputy Chair of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2012

Interview: B04, Mr. C, Committee Member of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2012

Interview: B05, Mr. WQ, Committee Member of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2012

Interview: B06, Mr. LL, Worker in Department of Engineering, YICT, Shenzhen, 25/07/2012

Interview: B07, Mr. WY, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 25/07/2012

Interview: B08, Mr. L, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 26/07/2012

Interview: B09, Mr. HB, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 26/07/2012

Interview: B10, Mr. HZJ, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 26/07/2012

Interview: C01, Mr. W, Enterprise Trade Union Chair, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C02, Ms W, Office Director of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C03, Mr. QY, Deputy Chair of Enterprise Trade Union, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C04, LQW, General Manager, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C05, Mr. W, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C06, Mr. CL, Worker in Manufacturing Department YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C07, Mr. L, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C08, Mr. D, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C09, Mr. K, Crane Operator, Shenzhen, 05/08/2013

Interview: C10, Mr. W, SFTU official, Shenzhen, 22/08/2013

Interview: C11, Ms. L, SFTU official, Shenzhen, 12/11/2013

Interview: C12, SFTU Mr. G, SFTU official, Shenzhen, 12/11/2013

Interview: C14, Mr. S, SFTU official, Shenzhen, 12/11/2013



Interview: D01, Mr. W, Enterprise Trade Union Chair, YICT, Shenzhen, 23/07/2015

Interview: D02, Mr. H, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 24/07/2015

Interview: D03, Mr. L, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 24/07/2015

Interview: D04, Mr. HH, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 24/07/2015

Interview: D05, Mr. HZ, Crane Operator, YICT, Shenzhen, 24/07/2015

Interview: D06, Mr. HZJ, Crane Operator,, YICT, Shenzhen, 24/07/2015

Interview: E01, Mr. D, Labour Lawyer, LW law firm, Shenzhen,23/12/2014

Interview: E02, Mr. H, NGO staff, LW law firm, Shenzhen,23/12/2014